

Strategic Priority 4: Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

The Arlington Public Schools will partner collaboratively with families in meeting the educational needs of all students; facilitate consistent two-way communication; and provide timely, transparent, relevant, and accessible information to all stakeholders.

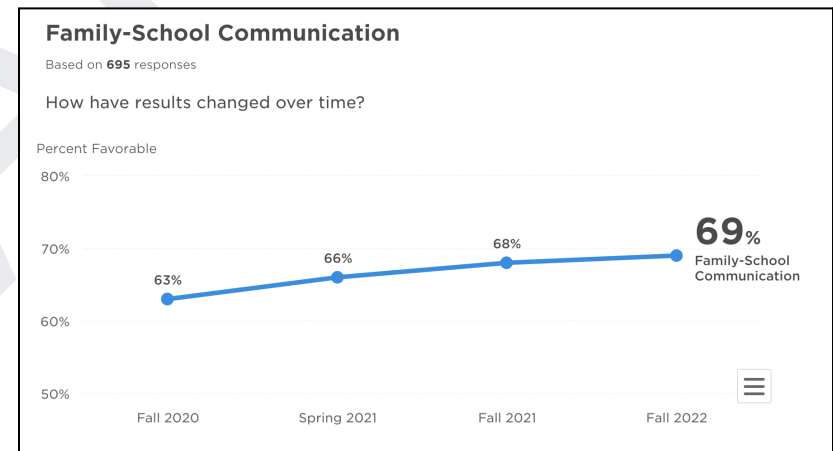
Needs Assessment to Support Initiatives

Strategic Priority 4 is designed to address the following challenges identified by the larger strategic planning team and the Strategic Priority 4 Working Group: APS currently has inconsistent approaches to communication with families and relies on one-way communication with families. APS also is not always clear about the follow-up actions taken in response to feedback, when that feedback is solicited. Finally, APS lacks a centralized location for families to acquire information about and be welcomed into the schools in an easy-to-access format, and lacks the capacity to rapidly expand communications and parent engagement efforts. Additionally, APS is challenged by a lack of access to umbrella (before and after) care programming, which is particularly impacting our already-marginalized families and groups of students.

APS is currently reliant on inconsistent one-way communication with families, and schools and teachers across the district also have different ways of sharing updates with families. The district needs to build consistent expectations, with room for teacher- and administrator-flexibility and creativity, for communication with families, including parameters surrounding frequency and style of communication, in order to improve the helpfulness and accessibility of one-way communications. While overall ratings for family-school communications have improved on Culture and Climate surveys since Fall of 2020, 31% of families still indicate that family-school communications require further improvements. Furthermore, when asked to what extent the schools value families' input, only 55% of families reported feeling as though the schools value their opinions "quite a bit" or "a tremendous amount."

Disproportionately, those families who are most challenged in their relationships with the Arlington Public Schools are those families whose children are in the focal groups identified in other areas of this strategic plan: the families of students with IEPs, of students of color, and of students who are transgender report the least supportive relationships with the schools across categories on school culture and climate surveys. For example:

- The families of students with IEPs report 17% less favorable school response in "Student Needs" and "Learning Behaviors"



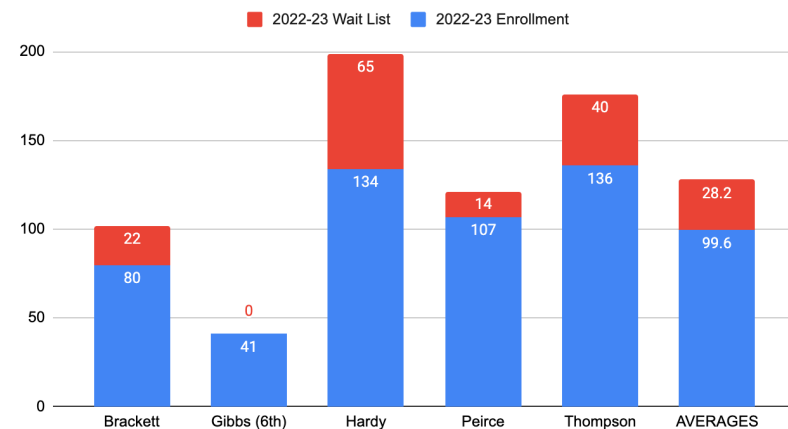
categories on the family survey;

- The families of students who identify as transgender report significantly less positive home-school relationships and support than the families of students who do not identify as transgender, across all categories of the family culture and climate survey; and
- The families of students who identify as black or African American report 26% less positively “Additional Family Assistance,” 15% less positively on “Cultural Awareness and Action,” 13% less positively on “School Climate,” and 15% less positively on “Student Needs” than the families of their white or Caucasian peers.
- Families who do not speak English at home report significantly less satisfaction on “Additional Family Assistance” categories of Culture and Climate surveys, ranging from 3 to 11% less satisfied than English-speaking parents.

Group Name	Group Size	Additional Family Assistance	Cultural Awareness and Action	Family-School Communication	Learning Behaviors	School Climate	School Safety	Student Needs
All respondents	695	89%	53%	69%	50%	74%	82%	78%
Does your child identify as transgender?								
Yes	11	-3	-15	-3	-14	-7	-5	-20
No	658	0	+1	+1	0	0	0	0
I'm not sure	16	-5	-16	-5	-3	-9	+4	-12
I prefer not to answer this q...	7	-11	-21	-26	-17	-33	-17	-21

Arlington families have also expressed significant needs and concerns surrounding assistance that is critical to supporting students throughout the day, including before and after school. Wait lists for after school programs have frustrated Arlington families for years, including as we emerge from the pandemic. Challenges associated with expanding before- and after-school care options include staffing and space shortages. The pandemic also disrupted the availability of enrichment activities that could be offered and would extend students’ connections to peers and school through engagement in after-school clubs, extracurricular activities, or academic enrichment; however, the district does not currently have the staffing capacity to design and offer such programming.

AASP Programs: 2022-23 Enrollment and Wait List



Finally, an identified need in multiple Tiered Focused Monitoring reviews by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

has been expanded supports for the families of English Learners. APS has put significant efforts into forming and sustaining an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC), but has struggled to maintain momentum and to sustain the ELPAC in partnership with families. Findings from a TFM review prior to the pandemic cited APS for a lack of robust translation and interpretation services for families. Over the past year and a half, the percentage of students who are English Learners in APS has increased, with more students coming from countries in the Middle East and South America. Arlington went from having an EL population of 4.1% in 2021 to 5% currently, the highest percentage of English Learners in Arlington since 2013.

Initiatives designed to meet these needs include the creation and staffing of district-wide Family Engagement resources as part of a Family Welcome Center, the expansion of before- and after-school offerings to support families and students' connections to school beyond the regular school day, and refinement of communications strategies, expectations, and consistency throughout the district.